Roanoke Police Department

Annual Review of Biased Based Policing

Annual Review for Calendar Year 2022

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Interim Chief Jerome Stokes

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Abstract

In calendar year 2022, the Roanoke Police Department responded to 100,376 citizen calls for service and conducted 6,187 traffic stops. Officers initiated 749 contacts with the public. There were 107,312 official police-public contacts. During the calendar year 2022 there were 27 citizen complaints received by the Roanoke Police Department that included 50 allegations and involved 34 employees. All complaints were investigated in a timely manner and on an individual basis. This is a complaint rate of 0.0025% per public contact.

In 2022, there were four citizen complaints involving 6 officers which alleged racial bias. After investigation, all four officers exonerated of the allegations.

This analysis included a review of Operational Directive 2.4.2, Prohibition of Discriminatory Conduct and Bias Based Profiling and Department supporting policies, practices and procedures. This analysis did not identify nor indicate a need to revise Operational Directive 2.4.2 or any supporting policies, practices or procedures.

Introduction

The Roanoke Police Department has long been invested in a culture of community-oriented policing, with the formal history of this going back thirty years. Each subsequent Chief has endorsed these values as critical to the mission of the Roanoke Police Department.

A major barrier against bias in policing is through the cultural adoption of community policing, not just as a practice but also as a philosophy of policing. The Roanoke Police Department has a history of community policing that spans across the previous thirty years. Introduced to the department under the administration of Chief Joe Gaskins, continued under the administrations of Chief Chris Perkins and Chief Tim Jones, and lately by Chief Sam Roman.

Recently, the department has developed the RESET program for community outreach in the face of gun violence. The Roanoke Police Department is invested in a holistic, comprehensive strategy to combat gun violence and violent crime in our community. As such, we are proud to house the Rapid Engagement of Support in the Event of Trauma (RESET). The RESET team deploys to neighborhoods that have endured a recent rash of gun violence.

Badge Buddies is program of weekly jogs with youths from the neighborhood. Accompanied by officers, these juveniles go on daily runs with officers on the greenway. Similarly, the department continues to engage the community through involvement in the West End Center walks. Again, officers accompany children from the West End Center on walks through the neighborhood.

The following table shows the demographic breakdown for the four quadrants in the city and is based on the current U.S. Census estimates

Zone	Quadrant	Tot Pop	Percent	White	White Perc	Black	Black Perc	All Other	All Oth Perc
1	SE	21049	21.03%	15887	28.23%	2614	9.43%	933	11.41%
2	NE	24205	24.19%	13878	24.66%	4157	14.99%	3832	46.85%
3	SW	25872	25.85%	19405	34.48%	3337	12.03%	1302	15.92%
4	NW	28942	28.92%	7112	12.64%	17622	63.55%	2113	25.83%

The Northwest quadrant is the most heavily populated and has the highest percentage of Black residents. The Southwest is the next most populated and has the highest concentration of White citizens.

Analysis

The data for this analysis were drawn from the Records Management System (RMS) for the calendar year 2022. Specifically, the data represent traffic stops where an enforcement action was taken and all arrests for 2022.

To make the determination if there is disproportionate contact with minority citizens, a disproportionality index (DI) is computed for citations and arrests based on the Zone and Patrol District where the contact occurred. A DI is computed by comparing the proportion of the contacts which occurred (by race/ethnicity) to an appropriate benchmark. A benchmark is an estimate of the proportion of the population that would be expected to be encountered when there is no bias present. The formula is as follows

$$DI = \frac{Proportion\ actually\ encountered}{Proportion\ expected\ to\ encounter\ when\ no\ \ bias}$$

When the DI=1, then the proportion encountered is exactly what would be expected when no bias is present. Disproportionality Index values less than one indicate less frequent contact than expected and values greater than one indicate more frequent contact than expected. For example, a DI=0.95 would indicate that the event occurred 5% less often than expected and a DI=1.05 would indicate it occurred 5% more often than expected.

The most appropriate benchmark for traffic citations would be all bad drivers on the roads. In this case, an estimate of bad drivers is determined by taking the number of motor vehicle crashes where the driver was cited for being "at fault." This has an advantage in that it is not a department-initiated enforcement activity. Who gets into a motor vehicle crash is not under department control. By assessing the racial/ethnic breakdown of cited drivers in a motor vehicle crash, a benchmark estimate is generated.

The benchmark for arrests would be the actual number of offenders broken down by race/ethnicity. Since this is inherently an unknown, the best estimate for a benchmark is nondiscretionary arrests. Nondiscretionary arrests are those wherein the officer is required to affect an arrest such as serious domestic violence or felony offenses. In the case of nondiscretionary arrests, neither race nor ethnicity is a factor. By comparing discretionary arrests to nondiscretionary arrests, a DI can be calculated to determine if there is bias in discretionary arrests.

Traffic Citations

The following table presents the Disproportionality Index for traffic stops in the city. (Tables for the percent of crash citations and percent of traffic citations are available on request).

Traffic Citations by Driver Status

Race	Bad Drivers	Citations	DI
Asian	0.17%	0.61%	3.55
Black	43.35%	40.40%	0.93
Hispanic	0.17%	0.10%	0.57
Undetermined	4.15%	5.06%	1.22
White	52.16%	53.78%	1.03

The disparity index (DI) for traffic citations uses "bad drivers" as a benchmark. Bad drivers are drivers who were involved in a vehicle crash and found "at fault" in the accident. The benchmark is an analog of all bad drivers on the road. Ideally, bad drivers should receive citations on par with their driving habits. The DI is the ratio of traffic citations to bad drivers, by race.

The DI for Black drivers, 0.93, is less than one, indicating overall Black motorists are cited less often than expected (7% less often) compared to the benchmark. White motorists are cited 3% more often than expected.

There are no indications of bias in traffic stops.

Arrests

The following table presents the discretionary arrests compared to non-discretionary arrests for 2022.

Arrests Disparity Index

Race	Non-discretionary Arrests	Discretionary Arrests	DI
Asian	0.54%	0.52%	0.95
Black	68.11%	42.67%	0.63
White	31.35%	56.74%	1.81

Asians were arrested 5% less often than expected given serious Asian offenders. Black citizens were arrested 27% less often than expected and White citizens were arrested 31% more often than expected.

There are no indications of bias in arrest procedures.

Summary

Overall, there were 107,312 official police-public contacts the rate of citizen complaints at 0.025% is extraordinarily low. Four of those complaints was alleged to have been due to racial bias and the officers were exonerated on review of the body worn cameras.

With respect to traffic citations, the available evidence showed a Disproportionality Index for Black drivers of 0.93. This indicates that Black drivers were cited 7% less often than would be expected. This directly contradicts a study of traffic stop data completed by the Race and Social Policy Research Center at Virginia Tech. The problem with the Virginia Tech study is that it uses total population as a benchmark. This is a first-generation benchmark used frequently in similar studies of thirty years ago. The Roanoke Police Department uses a third-generation benchmark, at-fault drivers in a traffic crash. This a better representation of the number of bad drivers on the road compared to population demographics. White drivers were cited 3% more than expected.

With respect to arrests, the best benchmark is arrests that are non-discretionary (for serious felony crime). These are serious felony and domestic violence offenses that require, by law, that the offender be arrested. For the year 2022, Black citizens were subjected to discretionary arrests at a far lower rate than would be expected. Correspondingly, White citizens were arrested at a higher rate than would be expected.

There is no indication in the available data that there is systematic bias present in the policing operations of the Roanoke Police Department.